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Case No.: NORME-458A

REMARKS

The foregoing remarks that follow are responsive to the Office Action mailed May 17, 2006. In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected amended Claims 1, 11 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0126001, filed by Northcutt et al. (hereinafter "NORTHCUTT"). The Examiner further maintained rejections of Claims 2-10, 12-17, 19-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a).

I. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Amended Claims 1, 11, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over STEWART.¹ In rejecting the claims under §103(a), the Examiner indicates that STEWART discloses "a method for processing work requests in a system having a central computer containing a web server and a plurality of remote computer work stations coupled to said central computer, said method comprising: a. an originator creating a work request...and transmitting it to a first level for approval; b. said first level reviewing said work request and, if approved, transmitting it to a third level group lead for a work assignment; d. a facilitator assigned in the preceding step executing said work request; e. said third level group lead reviewing work performed by said facilitators, and transmitting approval to said fourth level in satisfactory; h. closing said work request; and i. an Administrator providing alternate personnel for any unavailable personnel at any one of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth levels." (Office Action, pages 2-3).

The Examiner responded to Applicants' argument that STEWART teaches allowing an administrator to assign tasks to alternative personnel and to generate reports to determine the workload assigned to each person. (Office Action, page 3). The Examiner further indicates that by determining the workload assigned to each personnel, the administrator is essentially determining the availability of each person and has the ability to assign tasks to personnel as desire. The Examiner concludes that therefore STEWART does teach "an administrator assigning alternative personnel in the event of the unavailability of personnel for the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth levels" as per claims 1, 11, and 18. The Examiner further

¹ Since Applicants cannot find a prior art reference to STEWART in the Examiner's list of references in the first and current Office Actions or in Applicants' Preliminary Amendment dated February 28, 2006, Applicants presume the Examiner intends to refer to NORTHCUTT whenever a reference to STEWART is made in the Office Action dated May 17, 2006.